

MONTANA SELECTED FOR WIND FOR SCHOOLS PROGRAM

HELENA - The United States Department of Energy has selected Montana as one of six states to participate in the inaugural year of the Wind for Schools Program.

The goal of the program is to engage rural communities in a discussion of wind energy while encouraging a knowledge and skill base for the industry.

The program will serve as a platform for teaching renewable energy principles and opportunities by providing schools with educational curriculum and access to state-of-the-art technology.

Other states selected to participate in the program are Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota.

DOE also funded the recent creation of the Wind Applications Center at MSU-Bozeman to support Wind for Schools activities and develop related coursework for engineering students considering a wind industry career. The MSU-WAC is expected to become a regional center for wind energy training, expertise and outreach.

To supplement limited federal funding, NorthWestern Energy recently awarded a substantial grant to enable program activities in Cascade, Fairfield, Livingston and Stanford school districts.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality has allotted funds from Montana-Dakota Utilities Co.'s Universal Systems Benefits Fund to help support the new Wind Applications Center at MSU-Bozeman.

Public support is now being actively sought to allow additional school districts to participate in the program. Broadview, Joliet and Glasgow already have been selected to become host schools and other school districts will be able to join as funding allows.

In addition to financial contributions, in-kind support including electricians' labor, excavator time, concrete and materials such as electrical wire and equipment also are needed.

With consistent 25 to 30 percent annual growth over the last five years, wind energy may provide 20 percent of the country's electricity by 2030. The DOE predicts Montana's wind industry alone could grow from its current 166 to 10,000 megawatts of installed capacity in the next 25 years.

Western Community Energy of Bozeman has been contracted by the DOE to serve as state facilitator for Wind for Schools Montana.

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